

me there," she said. "It seems a dreadful mistake, doesn't it?"

Inwardly the colonel blessed the forethought of his men. But he might have known that there was not one man under his command who would have told her—he might as well have killed her.

"But I am so glad that he has served his country with honor, and has come safely through these terrible dangers," Miss King continued. "He was—well, a little wild. But he has redeemed himself, as I knew he would. Congressman Lathrop—" she hesitated. Then, seeing the colonel's look, and mistaking it, she continued:

"He told my father that William would be safe under your care, Colonel Saunders. That is what everyone says about you at home. They call you"—she hesitated—"well, the 'Father of the Regiment.'"

In the brief moment that elapsed before he answered her a thousand thoughts rushed through the colonel's brain. A minute ago he had actually dipped his pen into the ink preparatory to signing the death warrant. Now the act seemed impossible. He thought of Gilfoy—he had been wild, but a good and brave soldier, conspicuous in many engagements until the devil of loneliness that was eating out his heart summoned the drink devil to his aid and the two together fuddled the boy's brains until he turned traitor and disgraced the regiment and his country. And Gilfoy, crazy from the villainous

native potations, had been like a man in a nightmare; he had remembered nothing from the day he deserted until he was captured, firing his rifle wildly into the air, alone in the deserted hut.

He might have saved him by a few kindly words. Instead he had committed him to the punishment cells for his first offenses, had bullied him, disciplined him, let him go to perdition—he, the "Father of the Regiment."

"Excuse me, Miss King," he said abruptly. "Pray be seated. I will be back in a few minutes." And he strode away under the blazing sun in the direction of the barracks.

Inside the yard the executioner was still fumbling with the trap, over which a dummy hung suspended, a hideous bound thing of a man's weight, dangling grotesquely from the cord. The colonel turned his eyes away.

Inside his cell William Gilfoy was seated beside his cot, staring vacantly through the bars at a wisp of blue. When the colonel entered he started as a man awakening out of a dream. The colonel sat down beside him upon the plank bed.

"Gilfoy," he said quietly, "your sweetheart is here."

Gilfoy looked hard at him.

"She hasn't been told?" he said impassively.

"Not yet, Gilfoy."

The boy smiled bravely. "I think it would be best to have it done as soon as possible," he said. "But, sir—must she know?"

"She shall never know," an-